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These are times of great opportunity and high risk for the agricultural sciences:

-- Great opportunities because of new legislation passed by Congress, reorganization by the Department, and this administration's commitment to meet the food and fiber needs of the nation.

And there are high risks, for the spotlight now sharply focused on the agricultural sciences can illuminate our weaknesses more than our strengths. There are high risks because the pressures to perform could disrupt progress made over the years in program, cooperation, and coordination. And there are high risks because of the large number of those concerned with the outcome of legislation and reorganization. Undue dominance by any one special interest could reverse progress.

I personally believe that the opportunities for progress far outweigh risks. So, let me outline them for you, as I see them -- and let me also try to suggest ways we can keep the risks within reasonable limits.

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Presented by M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research, and Education, before the Division of Agriculture, National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, Washington, D. C., November 14, 1977.

The new legislation is a clear message from Congress that the agricultural sciences should have a greater role in the scientific affairs of our nation. As the Conference Report said it, "Both the Senate bill and the House amendment state several findings to the effect that the Nation's food and agricultural research and extension efforts should be extended and approved."

The law contains numerous dollar authorizations, some specific and some general. Most of these are considerably higher than present levels of funding. If fulfilled, these authorizations could go far toward helping us meet our priorities.

The definition of the agriculture sciences in the new law is at least as broad as the definitions in the Hatch and Smith-Lever Acts and the Organic Act of the Department. It is even more explicit than those laws in areas such as aquaculture and human nutrition.

The new law increases the responsibilities of USDA in teaching as well as research and extension. It transfers to USDA specific funding responsibilities for teaching in the agricultural sciences that have long been in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

The new law designates the Department as the lead agency in research, extension, and teaching for the agriculture sciences.

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The lead agency designation is qualified, quite properly, in the biomedical aspects of human nutrition research. Nevertheless, the law clarifies a longstanding impasse on who does what. In the past this impasse stymied efforts to meet urgent human nutrition research and education needs. With passage of the law, the Secretary has taken a strong stand that asserts the Department's determination to move in these important areas.

The law calls for increased cooperation and coordination and carefully spells out how ... in order to protect the historical pattern of cooperation among our Department, your institutions, and others. We are fully committed to meeting these terms.

The laws will broaden the range of institutions with whom we cooperate. It mandates we shall reach out to the entire scientific community to utilize the best talents and expertise that exist, regardless of institutional affiliations. Our partnership of many years with your institutions will be extended to others. We need your help in making this extension substantial and in the best interests of program needs.

The new law emphasizes partnership with the 1890 land-grants and Tuskegee Institute. It provides continuous funding for these historically Black institutions, placing them squarely in the mainstream of research and extension in their respective States. By working together in the spirit as well as the letter of these provisions, we will further strengthen the progress we have made to date.

Other sections of the law call for program priorities. I mentioned human nutrition research and human nutrition education. Animal disease research and veterinary college programs are given major importance. Small-farm operators and solar energy are among the priority programs.

Competitive grants are authorized for undergraduate and graduate education. Specific grants are specified for developing of industrial hydrocarbons and alcohols from agriculture commodities.

The law strengthens the role of USDA in international research and extension. It provides for scientific exchanges, strengthening of university capabilities, and the development of professional careers in international science. It recognizes the need to coordinate these activities with AID and other Federal agencies.

Shortly after the law was signed, Secretary Bergland announced his reorganization of USDA. Some months in the planning, this reorganization is aimed at simplifying and streamlining the bewildering maze of agencies in the Executive Branch. The Secretary's plan reduces by 14 the number of agencies in the Department.

Included is consolidating research, extension, and teaching into a single agency. Its aim is to strengthen the Department's ability to meet its responsibilities as the lead agency in the agriculture sciences. It goes without saying that we intend to build and increase the efficiency of existing successful activities -- not to destroy them.

Adjustments will have to be made. The challenge is to channel change so as to meet the needs of the American public and the needs of a widely dispersed, cooperative network through which these needs are met.

We're not implementing the law or reorganizing all alone. We have asked a number of non-USDA experts in agricultural science to work with us. These individuals represent research, extension, and teaching interests of your organization, of other institutions, and of the USDA agencies. Dr. James Nielson, my Deputy Assistant Secretary, is devoting full time to this effort along with a staff of seven. Mark Buchanan from your Division of Agriculture is in daily contact with this in-house task force.

The Secretary is determined that the Director of this new agency will be a highly qualified scientist with experience in administration. He should have recognized stature in the scientific and education community. An eight-member panel will help us with the criteria and selection of candidates. Non-USDA cooperators also are participating in this effort. We earnestly solicit the names of candidates from each of you.

Our reorganization plans should be completed by January. We want to establish the coordinating bodies provided in the law as soon as possible. We are developing guidelines for the new granting provisions with a target date of early next spring so that they can be fitted into the budget process that begins about that time.

The work to be done, and the timetable, are demanding. But with your help we fully intend to meet those demands.

The Congressional actions and the commitment of the Secretary of Agriculture to the agricultural sciences are the result of public concern about food and fiber that has been mounting for several years. This concern, manifested in Congressional action, has a high priority.

One of the highest of these priorities is research and education in human nutrition. Many Americans have serious doubts about the adequacy of their diet despite the abundance of food available to them.

They find the supermarket shelves filled with highly processed, quick-food items -- but are uncertain about the nutritional value of these items. They are told the items are there because consumers want them. Yet they are also barraged with unceasing salvos of advertising that try to influence their choices in the direction of these foods.

Questions are being raised about how good the American people's nutrition is, especially that of vulnerable groups such as preschool children, pregnant mothers, and the elderly.

They ask -- why can't we have the same emphasis on human nutrition that we do on animals? They ask about the nutritional impact of government food programs and that of general policies such as income distribution and taxes.

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Americans are well aware that millions overseas are hungry and malnourished. They ask those of us in the agricultural sciences to provide them with the knowledge needed to answer these questions. They're not satisfied with the answers we've provided to date. This is a challenge to extension and teaching that calls for new and more effective methods of bringing to people the information we have and they need.

Energy. It's a problem that is here to stay. Solving it is critical to the future of American agriculture, which runs on fossil fuels. Research is up on applications of solar energy. We need more and we need more effective means of energy conservation. The cost of fuels is not going to decrease. We have an obligation to farmers to help them keep these costs to a minimum.

We need further commitment to new and more effective methods of pest management, particularly those that reduce the dependence of agriculture on chemical pesticides. These chemicals will always be necessary -- but we must blend their use with non-chemical controls and strive for long term solutions to pest problems.

Environmental pollution is still with us. If there's one complaint that is generally expressed by farmers, it is that there is too much environmental regulation; that these regulations interfere with farming and raise costs of production. It seems to me that our obligation in research, extension, and teaching is to provide information to regulatory agencies that will help make their decisions appropriate, practical, and reduce disruption of

agriculture efficiency. And, we have an even greater obligation to develop knowledge that will allow people in agriculture to meet environmental needs and protect their own health while maintaining efficiency.

We've been concerned with productivity for a long time. However, there is a growing awareness within the agriculture community and by the public that the productivity gains registered in the past may not continue. Hence, there is growing support for additional basic research, especially as it relates to crop productivity, and to a lesser extent, animal productivity.

The public agenda for the agricultural sciences also puts a high priority on research and extension especially tailored to the problems of small-farm operators and their families. This transcends technical efficiency important as it is. We need to find ways to help large number of rural people who find it difficult, if not impossible, to utilize our traditional programs. Many of these people want to remain in rural America. We should improve their options for doing so. Some may want to move out of rural areas. We should help make that transition as smooth as possible. This will take innovative ideas and dedicated effort from all of us.

These priorities, Congressional mandates, the new law and reorganization confront us -- all of us -- with enormous challenges. Yet the opportunities are equally enormous.

With other cooperating organizations and institutions, we have the greatest opportunity in this century to insure that agricultural research, extension and teaching attain its full potential.

My pledge to you is that we will give the fullest consideration possible to the cooperation and partnerships we have had with your organization, your institutions, and with many of you personally, over these many years.

We are counting on you to help us.

Thank you.

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